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ABSTRACT

This working paper discusses the unique and complex issues community colleges face in providing career counseling and guidance to students, and it provides an overview of the current status of these services. Guidance and counseling at community colleges is complicated by the variety of students and the varying needs of population--from the older student who may be changing careers to the young first-generation student with little information about both education and employment. Though campuses have counseling and guidance centers, these centers are often adjuncts that have little resources and high student-to-counselor ratios. This is complicated by the fact that many institutions have several centers such as the transfer center, the career center, and separate centers for low-income, minority, or disabled students. Although this separation of services is justified as serving the diverse needs of students, its efficacy is not clear. The paper discusses how research needs to be done to better understand the needs of students and how to meet those needs. It also suggests that comprehensive research needs to be done, among other things, to assess the variety of services offered, the resources committed to guidance and counseling, and how different approaches to counseling affect students. (Contains 23 references.) (LD)

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"GETTING INTO THE WORLD": GUIDANCE AND COUNSELING IN COMMUNITY COLLEGES

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ABSTRACT

Guidance and counseling services have developed in educational institutions throughout this century to help students at all levels make occupational choices, understand the relation between school and subsequent employment, and address a variety of academic and personal issues. Guidance and counseling in community colleges are especially difficult, however, because of the variety of students, their differing goals, the presence of many "experimenters" searching among options, and students with "misaligned ambitions," or unrealistic perceptions of occupations and their educational requirements. Unfortunately, guidance and counseling (like other students services) have often been marginalized within colleges, and research is sparse.

Despite the lack of extensive review, the crucial issues about counseling and guidance are relatively clear. One is the magnitude of resources, since surveys show student:counselor ratios in the vicinity of 1,000:1. Another issue is the variety of services provided, since many colleges provide traditional counseling, workshops, and courses, and various non-college experiences (like internships). Counselors usually spend considerable time on college counseling, which is related to educational requirements, and on personal counseling, which takes resources away from specially career-oriented counseling. The approaches to counseling also vary, with "trait and factor" approaches (which help students identify occupations compatible with their interests and abilities) dominating and leading to information provision—despite reasons to believe that information is necessary but not sufficient for many students. Finally, it seems likely that there are substantial differences among students in their use of guidance and counseling, potentially leading to those students in need of guidance failing to use the services available.

While many of the basic issues in guidance and counseling are difficult to investigate, one preliminary question to answer is what services colleges now provide (although the effectiveness of different services and approaches in helping students achieve their goals will remain elusive). A straightforward research approach is examination of the services provided, the information available, and perspectives of counselors and others in a sample of community colleges.

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Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION 1
SPECIAL CAREER PREPARATION ISSUES 1
Career Choice 2
Career-Education Alignment 3
Appropriateness of Services 4
WHAT IS KNOWN ABOUT GUIDANCE AND COUNSELING? 5
Amount of Resources 6
Type of Counseling and Services 6
Organization and Timing of Services 9
Counseling Strategies 10
Student Need for Counseling 12
A RESEARCH AGENDA FOR EXAMINING GUIDANCE AND COUNSELING IN COMMUNITY COLLEGES 15
ENDNOTES 18
REFERENCES 20

INTRODUCTION

In a simpler world without occupational choices, where sons succeed their fathers and daughters become mothers and homemakers, there are few decisions for young people to make about their occupations. But as occupational possibilities expand, some mechanisms must facilitate the choice among them. Sometimes, parents have made these choices for their children, and even now there is a strong tendency for children to "choose" to follow a parent's occupation. But in a liberal society, individuals are expected to choose their life courses for themselves. Increasingly these choices have been made in schools and colleges, as occupational preparation has moved into these institutions and away from family settings and apprenticeships. Virtually every education and training program, from high school through university, has therefore developed some form of guidance and counseling program, initially to help students make choices about their lives and their schooling, and subsequently to help them make progress through the institution.

SPECIAL CAREER PREPARATION ISSUES

Provision of guidance and counseling services in any institution is complex, but it is especially difficult in community colleges. The sheer variety of students in community colleges is challenge enough, since older students with some experience in the labor force seeking to change careers need different services from those required by traditional-age students coming from high schools (Healy & Reilly, 1989). Many are first-generation college students, with little information from their families about progress through higher education. In some regions of the country, many are recent immigrants, unfamiliar with the education and employment options in this country.

Career Choice

An additional counseling challenge is that many individuals entering community colleges appear to be undecided students or "experimenters," unsure of their educational and occupational goals (Manski, 1989). Many of them understand that further education is necessary for upward mobility, but they are unsure what occupation they want to enter, or unclear about the relationship between schooling and their aspirations. As one of these students described his situation (Grubb, 1996, p. 68),

> When I first came here I had no idea what I wanted to study. I knew I wanted . . . because I know the only way to have a good life is to get a degree. I didn't really have much idea of what I wanted to do. I knew I needed to go to school, though.

Similarly, older students wanting to change careers may enter college without any particular goal in mind, on the assumption that something will turn up with more promise than their current job; as one mentioned,

> Well, it'll be nine years this August that I've been licensed [as a manicurist], which is the longest I've ever done anything, and I really do enjoy it. But I feel like there's . . . you can only go so far, and I would just like to have an opportunity someday to do something else. I just don't happen to know what it is right now. (p. 69-70)

Many experimenters come to community colleges because they serve, among their other purposes, as places for finding more information about career options. And many experimenters perceive the community college to be the most appropriate route to a career: low cost and convenient. As one student searching for his way into an adult job declared,

> It's really the only way to get into the world. You can just be yourself and go to college, and then get out of college and do your own thing. (p. 68)

Other students—particularly those who have left high schools, with their inadequate guidance programs—seem to have "misaligned ambitions" (Schneider & Stevenson, 1999). They have high aspirations but their schooling has been unrelated to their nominal goals, and they find themselves without the science or math for technical occupations, or without the basic verbal and mathematical skills necessary for postsecondary education. For these students, the task is to reconcile their schooling with their ambitions—preferably not, as many have charged, by means of counselors simply telling them to moderate their ambitions, but rather by means of counselors encouraging them to enhance their schooling in ways consistent with their ambitions.

The consequences of failing to meet students' needs adequately are likely to include low rates of completion and transfer. Experimenters who never discover what they want to do are likely to drift around, taking unrelated courses and finally dropping out because they have found no clear direction:

> I know lots and lots of people out of high school who go to community college because they have nothing else to do, and have no idea what they want to do. And for some people that's fine—they go and they take their classes and eventually, a couple years down the road, they'll pick a major, and then they end up getting their bachelor's. But just as many don't. They just, you know . . . "What am I doing here? I have no idea why I'm taking these classes." That's the situation that I found myself in, and a lot of my friends. (p. 75)

Similarly, Schneider and Stevenson (1999) describe situations where students with misaligned ambitions drop out of college, as they slowly come to realize that achieving their goals will require more schooling, over longer periods of time, than they are prepared for. And, while faculty are generally sympathetic with the lives of their students they sometimes complain that

the presence of so many students without clear goals makes their teaching jobs all the harder; as one mentioned, "I have some people who want to take the class for in ormation, and don't intend to do any of the work" (Grubb & Associates, 1999, p. 5). Another noted the problem of unrealistic ambitions:

> Two-thirds of my students in the very basic skills classes can barely write. But I'll get, "I don't really see anything that will hold me back." It's things like that are clueing me into the fact that the realness of this decision has not come to them. (p. 5)

And so the consequence of failing to provide adequate guidance and counseling *might* include students who are milling around with no purpose, classes with too many students unready to learn the content, and high rates of non-completion.[1] As a result, colleges indicate that two forms of guidance and counseling—specific counseling services, and faculty advisors—are the most common ways of enhancing transfer (Cohen & Brawer, 1996).

Appropriateness of Services

At the same time that guidance and counseling seem particularly important for community colleges, criticism of these services has often been intense. When Clark (1960) first described "cooling out" students forty years ago, he largely blamed counselors for moderating the ambitions of students with low levels of academic skills and then directing them toward vocational programs. Advocates for low-income and minority students often charge that counselors treat such students as incapable, view their ambitions as unrealistic, and steer them toward lower-status programs and shorter certificate programs. (Advocates then recommend countervailing measures; for example, the Puente program in California has been explicitly

designed to replace counselors thought to be hostile to Latino students with Latino counselors and mentors from the community who are more supportive.)

Occupational faculty often charge that counselors know nothing about their programs, and direct students toward academic programs without knowing about the employment and transfer benefits of occupational alternatives. Similarly, those trying to establish new and innovative programs—such as learning communities or novel occupational programs (in biotechnology or computer-aided manufacturing, for example)—often complain that counselors are either ignorant of or hostile to their efforts.[2] Finally, students themselves seem to have low opinions of guidance and counseling. For example, Baker's (1998) survey of students in four colleges revealed that satisfaction was much lower for student services than for other dimensions of the colleges (including instruction, which ranked the highest); the quality of career planning and placement services was rated even lower than other student services. And so, despite its apparent importance, the provision of guidance and counseling has often been surrounded by controversy.

WHAT IS KNOWN ABOUT GUIDANCE AND COUNSELING?

Unfortunately, given the potential importance of guidance and counseling, the services have been largely under-appreciated and little examined. Like other services that do not directly generate enrollments and therefore revenues, guidance and counseling have often been relatively peripheral to community colleges. Within colleges, guidance and counseling often appear to be relatively isolated, and faculty often report knowing little to nothing about what various counseling centers do. There has been relatively little research, either by individuals concerned

with community colleges or by those who examine guidance and counseling issues more generally.[3] The lack of research means that, while a few individuals in specific colleges may know a great deal about the availability of guidance and counseling services locally, it is difficult to generalize about community colleges across the country.

Amount of Resources

However, a variety of issues have emerged in what little research has been done so far. One of the most obvious involves the level of overall *resources*. Keim (1989) surveyed colleges across the country, and determined an average student-counselor ratio of 951:1 (calculated in terms of full-time counselors and students). This ratio is even higher than in high schools, where ratios of 500:1 to 700:1 are common, and suggests that student complaints about lack of access to counseling may simply result from the lack of counselors. Keim's survey also found that a majority of counselors were men (63 percent) and white (85 percent); thus, if there are special issues in counseling black and Latino students for which counselors who share their culture would be helpful, or if women seeking to improve their occupations or to enter the labor market after childrearing have special needs, which female counselors might best meet, community colleges may not be adequately staffed.

Type of Counseling and Services

Another dimension of the resources provided involves the *variety of services*. As a visit to almost any community college reveals, colleges generally provide guidance and counseling in different forms and programs. For example, a college may have a counseling center, a separate

transfer center, a career center, and still other centers for low-income or minority students and for disabled students. They may provide individual counseling in various formats, as well as group counseling—though Coll and House (1992) found very little provision of group counseling, despite the feelings of many counselors that group services would be more efficient and often more effective. In addition, some colleges provide courses, seminars, and workshops ranging from a few hours to an entire school year. The topics can include understanding the labor market and occupational alternatives, identifying personal strengths and weaknesses, developing decision-making skills, practicing aspects of job finding (like the ubiquitous seminars on preparing resumes, completing job applications, and honing/refining interviewing techniques), and exploring other dimensions of career decisions.

Still other colleges offer work experience or internship or co-operative education programs that provide students with more direct experiences in the labor market; LaGuardia Community College, the only college to require co-op education, explicitly treats these experiences as forms of career exploration for liberal studies students (Grubb & Badway, 1998). There is no evidence that any of these activities is more effective than any other (Herr & Cramer, 1992), though some are quite ephemeral and others are much more intensive. There is, however, a consensus that colleges should provide a complete range of services to meet a variety of needs.

Nevertheless, there has been no investigation of how common these various types of services are at community colleges, although it is relatively clear that individual counseling is the most common form and that extensive work experience or co-op education programs are comparatively rare in community colleges (Stern, Finkelstein, Stone, Latting & Dornsife, 1995), except in a few fields like nursing. (It is possible that the recent interest in service learning could expand the experiential programs available to students, though this movement is still new.) In

addition, the resources for any one service may vary widely; for example, deVries (1998) found that two community colleges in Wyoming had Level I career centers, defined as having little more than a collection of materials; four had Level II centers, staffed by a part-time counselor and conducting limited workshops; and four had Level III centers, with trained career counselors providing a range of assessments, inventories, workshops, job placement, and ties to community networks. Therefore, what it means to have a center and to provide a particular service may vary widely from college to college.

From Keim's survey and from research by Coll and House (1992), it appears there exists a *variety of types of counseling*. Counselors report spending a majority of their time on academic or college counseling—that is, they provide advice to help students make progress through the college by taking courses and credits required for various credentials and for transfer. They spend slightly less time on personal counseling, related to the non-collegiate issues that students have, such as family problems, health, substance abuse, and the like. Finally, both surveys indicate that they spend much less time—roughly half as much as on academic counseling—on career counseling, or helping students decide what occupations they would like to enter and the appropriate routes for doing so. Certainly academic and personal counseling may be important to completion, but the relative lack of time for career counseling means that the concerns of experimenters, or those with "misaligned ambitions," may receive much less attention than do the students with relatively clear goals who need to know what specific course are necessary to achieve those goals.

Organization and Timing of Services

In addition, the advantages and disadvantages of providing many types of services distributed through many different offices and programs, rather than offering them in a centralized program, are not clear. On the one hand, providing guidance and counseling in many forms is sometimes promoted as a way of meeting the different needs of different students in different forums; the standard recommendation to provide a complete range of services implies that specific services might be appropriate in certain situations or for particular students. In addition, duplication and redundancy may be one way to ensure that more students find their way to this service. On the other hand, it may be confusing for students to face such options, and, as a result, some colleges have articulated the need for "one stop shopping." When services are widely distributed, it is not clear how they are articulated with one another, though an individual student may need career counseling *and* academic counseling *and* personal counseling—in different offices, with individuals of varying types of qualifications. So the effects of distributed rather than centralized services remain unknown.[4] Yet another way to organize counseling is to follow the caseworker method, when one counselor works with a student throughout his or her college career to guarantee continuity. However, with the exception of the Puente program, there's been little attention to the caseworker model; instead there's been a much greater reliance on drop-in counseling, an approach almost guaranteeing that continuity cannot take place.

Furthermore, the *timing of services* may be important, but it has not been extensively examined. Herr and Cramer (1992) have noted that, at least in four-year colleges, counseling resources may be concentrated in the later years of college, as graduation and the prospects of employment loom large, rather than in the early years when students are deciding on their overall

direction and major. If this were also true in community colleges, it would imply that the concerns of experimenters and those with misaligned ambitions are being relatively neglected. A reasonable hypothesis, for example, is that many colleges place greater emphasis on transfer, and on counseling and other services related to transfer, than on services made available when students initially enter college and are considering their options. If this scenario were true, it might constitute a kind of inequity, focusing services on students with clear educational goals—who are also more likely to be white and middle class—rather than on students with unsettled educational and occupational plans.

Counseling Strategies

From the literature on guidance and counseling, it is also clear that there are substantially different *conceptual approaches* to the task of guidance—that is, different ideas about what the counselor should be doing in interactions with students. By far the most common approach to career counseling has been the so-called trait and factor approach, in which counselors help students uncover their own preferences, personality traits, and strengths, and then provide them with information about the occupations most suited to their interests and abilities. The result is a counseling process that often involves administering interest and personality inventories and then providing information about a selected number of occupations—a process sometimes belittled as "test 'em and tell 'em." Indeed, the tactic of providing information, or the "information dump," is clearly the dominant approach to counseling in this country, at various levels.[5] Within many community colleges, various different offices provide different forms of information, from transfer centers specializing in information about transfer requirements, to career centers, to counseling centers focusing on academic counseling rather than career counseling.

However, if students are not sophisticated in their use of information, then the "information dump" is not an effective way to help them make decisions about their own life. As a result, other approaches to counseling stress the acquisition of decision-making skills—as if decision-making is a process that can be easily learned, like arithmetic skills or computer skills, through short workshops or courses. Still others emphasize that decision-making is a complex competency that can be developed only over a long period of time, shaped by the right kinds of experiences as well as information. As British researchers have clarified, with their longer history of voucher and choice mechanisms in schools and colleges, information may be necessary but it is rarely sufficient.[6] In order to make use of information, students need to be able to judge the information they receive, and to distinguish well intentioned but inaccurate information (from friends, for example) from misleading information (from proprietary schools, for example) from accurate but unhelpful information (from statewide surveys of labor markets, for example). In addition to information, students must have well-formed preferences, which experimenters lack. They need to be able to weigh present and future possibilities and the trade-offs among them; they should understand probabilistic events in order to make decisions about educational and occupational alternatives with different probabilities of success. They must consider a wide range of alternatives including some, like formal schooling itself, which may have treated them badly in the past and which they may not be able to consider dispassionately and rationally. And so decision-making proves to be a multi-faceted competence in its own right, one that is increasingly necessary in a complex economy of shifting occupations—but one which conventional guidance and counseling do not address. Thus, more substantial experiences—semester-long courses, internships or co-op placements, service and experiential learning—may be a necessary component of decision-making. Counselors in this tradition often stress the need

for a more "wholistic" approach, using a variety of strategies to lead students to understand themselves, their capacities, and the alternatives in much deeper ways, and they never pretend that information alone is enough.

Student Need for Counseling

Finally, there has been too little attention to *students* in community colleges and their needs for counseling—even though instructors in their classrooms and counselors in their interactions often come to know their own students quite well. Perhaps the most basic kind of information, from the viewpoint of guiding students to attain their goals, is knowledge of what those goals are. However, the information about student goals is probably unreliable. Virtually all colleges ask their students, upon applying or enrolling, what their goals are; but if students are undecided, or are experimenters, they may check the transfer box as the most socially acceptable answer, even though they have no idea what that entails.[7] Similarly, students with "misaligned ambitions" will almost surely assert their desire to transfer, even though they may have no idea how much subsequent education (including remedial coursework) their ambitions require. The answers to questions about student goals are quite variable: some colleges report a vast (and surely unrealistic) majority of students aiming for transfer, while others show a majority who are uncertain (or who have not answered the question, which may be the same thing). Efforts to verify the validity of what students report—through interviews or sessions with counselors, for example—seem to be rare, so it is difficult to know how many students are experimenters, or have uninformed expectations, or enroll in community colleges for other reasons (including non-vocational purposes).

The issue of student goals is further complicated by a longstanding debate about the outcomes of community colleges. As many have pointed out, completion rates in community colleges are quite low; for example, of all students entering community colleges in 1989-90, 48.6 percent of them had not earned a degree and were not enrolled five years later (Berkner, Cuccaro-Alamin, McCormick, & Bobbitt, 1996, Table 2.1b). Whether low completion rates indicate high rates of dropping out for financial or family reasons, dissatisfaction with the college, attainment of goals through limited amounts of coursework, or lack of any intention of earning a credential, is a question that has never been empirically resolved.[8] In most surveys of student expectations, relatively few entering students declare they have enrolled to earn just a few courses for advancement. Furthermore, it is clear that those with small amounts of coursework do not substantially increase their earnings on the average (Grubb, 1999, Table 5), though it is quite likely that individuals in certain well-targeted programs do. Thus the interpretation of low completion rates has depended on different assumptions about why students are enrolling in the first place, and these issues of student intentions remain murky.

In addition, there has been little analysis of *which students use guidance and counseling*, and, conversely, of which students need them but do not seek them out. In one college, Herndon, Kaiser, and Creamer (1996) found that white students received more counseling than black students; among white students, those in transfer majors received more than non-transfer students—a result suggesting either that colleges provide such services selectively or that students self-select in ways that may not be helpful to minority and occupational students. In the interviews my colleagues and I (Grubb, 1996) carried out, a kind of triage situation seemed to emerge. Those students with the clearest career goals (including students trying to upgrade their skills for specific employers) did not go to see counselors because they did not need to, except

perhaps to verify the completeness of their courses. But the students with the greatest trouble making decisions about their future also reported not going to counselors—partly because of limited resources and awkward schedules, and partly because they did not know what to ask. As one student admitted, "Well, it's sort of hard for someone to give you direction if you don't have one" (p.77). Another noted the need for student initiative in conventional counseling situations: "In order for someone to help you out at the college, you have to look for help" (p.77). So it appeared that the best-informed students did not seek out counselors, and the worst informed did not either, for quite different reasons. Counseling and guidance appeared to be most helpful to students in the middle: those with some ideas about what they might do and some initiative. However, I stress that these conclusions are based on interviews with very few students, and have not been examined by others.[9]

And so community colleges confront a paradox. Given the students who enroll, and the variety of their backgrounds, goals, and levels of preparation, guidance and counseling seem to be among the most important supports that these institutions can provide. Indeed, in some colleges, where the majority of students seem undecided about their future, it is pointless to argue about missions—about the balance of transfer education and occupational preparation, for example—without first confronting the college as counselor.[10] But these services, like student services generally, have often been marginalized, under-funded, and under-researched, and so there is much to learn about guidance and counseling in community colleges.

A RESEARCH AGENDA FOR EXAMINING GUIDANCE AND COUNSELING IN COMMUNITY COLLEGES

Many of the critical questions about guidance and counseling are difficult to address, particularly those about the effectiveness of different approaches. The counseling encounter—the interaction between counselor and student—is normally hidden from scrutiny, and cannot be researched directly. The various criticisms of counselors—that they are racist or sexist in their advice, that they are relatively ignorant of local labor markets or new educational or occupational programs—are difficult to verify or dispute both because the counseling encounter is not observed and because students and counselors may have different perceptions. Other forms of guidance—courses and internships, for example—are more public and therefore easier to examine, but here too issues of effectiveness are difficult to investigate.

However, short of addressing the most problematic aspects of guidance and counseling, there is much to be learned about the services community colleges now provide. A series of institutional case studies could examine how services and approaches to guidance and counseling vary, how they fit within the overall institution, what students need from guidance and counseling, and how variation among colleges reflects other aspects—their sense of mission, for example, or their particular philosophy of education, or their understanding of who their students are.

In particular, such case studies could examine the following kinds of questions:

• What data are available about students and their goals? Are the standard questionnaires given to students about their intentions ever supplemented with other forms of inquiry:

interviews, for example, or initial sessions with counselors? Are the responses of students about their goals consistent with the institution's image of itself and the challenges it faces?

• What level of resources is devoted to guidance and counseling? For example, are the ratios near 1,000:1 reported by Keim (1989) prevalent, or have some colleges increased resources?

• What variety of services do colleges provide? Are there multiple sources of counseling, as some colleges have, or are there mechanisms to integrate such services and place them under one umbrella? Where there is a variety of services, do they include different forms of coursework and/or experiences outside the college, or are they limited to traditional counseling forms?

• How are the varied services coordinated? And how are they coordinated, if at all, with the instructional responsibilities of the academic, occupations, and developmental departments? How do other instructors view or participate in guidance and counseling, if at all?

• What do counselors reveal about their basic approaches to counseling? Do they follow the common approach of the "trait and factor" model and the provision of information, or have they developed alternative approaches?

• What do counselors and other faculty think about their students? What are their perceptions of student goals, of the barriers students face, about the certainty of their plans, about their assessments of the options they face? Are the problems of "experimenters" unsure of their goals substantial in their colleges, or do they have reason to believe that students enter with well-defined goals? Are the problems of "misaligned ambitions" serious?

• What are counselor perceptions of which students use and fail to use various services? Are existing services under- or over-utilized, and why? Do any colleges collect data on the use of

student services, and can these data be used to detect patterns of use—or even the effects of such use on subsequent completion?

The answers to such questions, from a significant sample of community colleges, would provide important information about current offerings and approaches to guidance and counseling. For the moment, the success of different services and different approaches in helping students achieve their goals will remain elusive, as it has been for guidance and counseling in general. But a necessary first step is to understand more clearly what community colleges now do to help their students select and effectively prepare for a fulfilling career.

ENDNOTES

[1] The idea that guidance and counseling would reduce milling around and inappropriate placement is a hypothesis, of course, and there is no real evidence to prove it. A common contrary view — that milling around (particularly in adolescence) is an inevitable part of human development, whether it takes place in schooling or in the labor market — simply abandons any concern with the nature of quality of counseling and guidance. This perspective also neglects the extent to which a great deal of milling around has been constructed by the nature of labor markets and educational institutions, and then become widely accepted even though it is potentially quite harmful.

[2] Evidence for empirical claims against counselors is widespread but anecdotal. The statements here are based on many years of interviewing administrators and faculty in community colleges, and I believe them to be widely accepted, but they have not been formally researched in any sense.

[3] On the general lack of research about student services, see Dungy (1999). For example, the standard bibliography on community colleges, Cohen and Brawer (1989), has only four pages about guidance and counseling (see pp. 180 - 183). The most comprehensive review of career guidance and counseling, Herr and Cramer (1992), includes a chapter on higher education, but only one citation on community college research. Some older references are in Cohen, Palmer, and Zwemer (1986, pp. 292-305). For recent writing, see the special issue on "Counseling in the Community College," *Community College Journal of Research and Practice*, Vol. 24, Summer 2000; and several bibliographies (including "New Resources for Counselors," "Student Personnel Services in the Community College," and "Student Development in the Community College") available from the ERIC Clearinghouse on Community Colleges (www.gseis.ucla.edu/ERIC/bibs). Most references cited in the ERIC bibliographies are guides for counselors or descriptions of services in specific colleges, rather than empirical research.

[4] The issue of distributed versus centralized services is an issue for several other elements within community colleges, including remedial or developmental education and placement services.

[5] See, for example, Table 10.a in Herr and Cramer (1992), in which three of the top five services provided are occupational information, educational information, and individual assessment information.

[6] See Hodkinson, Sparkes, and Hodkinson (1996), especially Ch. 8 on technical versus pragmatic rationality; and Reay and Ball (1997) on class differences in conceptions of choice.

[7] See, for example, the interviews with students reported in Grubb (1996). They often reported that they wanted to transfer but had little idea what transfer required or what courses were needed for baccalaureate-level occupations.

[8] For a recent study of one college, see Gittell and Steffy (2000). They conclude that many students (perhaps 45 percent) had no intention of earning a credential. For those who did want to complete, the lack of financial resources and the strain of combining work, family life, and schooling were the most prominent reasons for dropping out.

[9] The results in Grubb (1996, Ch. 2) are based on interviews with 41 students in five California community colleges. It proved to be extremely difficult to locate students who had

dropped out of these colleges, so that the sample of students interviewed is a sample of those who have stayed in college rather than a random sample.

[10] For example, in one college that is proud of its transfer function, 29.4 percent of entering students said they intended to transfer, 3.3 percent were there to formulate their plans, 21.9 percent were undecided, and 30.9 percent did not respond to the question. If the last group was also undecided, then 56.1 percent were undecided — so the first (and largely unrecognized) challenge this college faces is helping students decide what they intend to do.

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